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ABSTRACT

One of five papers discussing the humanistic model used in the training of reading teachers at City College of New York, this paper describes how the various field experiences of the developmental/remedial reading program are sequenced. Noting that the field experience courses are structured to give equal weight to the students' cognitive, affective, and social needs, the paper first outlines the components of the undergraduate program, in which potential teachers learn to work on a one-to-one basis with elementary school children. It also discusses the unique opportunities for bilingual students that are presented by the college's urban setting. The paper next outlines the components of the graduate program, which follows a developmental-remedial, developmental strategy. It notes that students are required to complete a first practicum, in which they are able to put into practice the skills learned in their earlier work, and an advanced practicum, in which they work with groups of children from different backgrounds, abilities, and attitudes using a developmental reading project method. The paper also offers a description of a graduate elective course in which students learn how to choose appropriate instructional materials. (FL)

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THE CITY COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
THE READING CENTER

Sequencing the Learning Experience of Urban Teachers

Speech to be delivered at the International Reading Association Conference

April 29, 1981
New Orleans, La.

Prof. Peggy M. Schwarz
The City College of N. Y.

The reading program at The City College is made up of courses in developmental and remedial reading which has its orientation in a humanistic discipline.

The masters and post-masters degrees are awarded in reading with certification in both.

The reading program aims at sequencing the various courses to prepare teachers not only to teach reading by attaining information and skills but also to help our students cope with and contribute to our society. They learn how to learn not only in relationship to reading but also in relationship to others, themselves, and their environment in order to make their lives more self-satisfying and more meaningful. In other words, according to our humanistic philosophy, the students learn to give equal weight to the cognitive, affective, social, and environmental factors necessary in their education.

Our courses are designed to give intellectual as well as personal growth. Although our sequence of courses is structured, it is important that students have some choice in the decision making of his/her overall program as well as in individual courses which would contribute to their confidence and positive self-concept. They have the freedom to choose some of the children with whom to work; they have the choice of materials, and in the research course, freedom of topic under supervision.

Students have teaching and learning experiences well before they get to graduate school. They are given the opportunity of beginning their reading instruction in their junior year in order to prepare them early for their humanistic background. Much of this is accomplished with the help of our advi-

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sory service. Students are encouraged to consult an adviser to plan their programs; to reveal their difficulties should they arise and to discuss their futures. The advisory service continues throughout their graduate education.

Undergraduate Program

From the very beginning, in the first course, the students are exposed to working with a particular child because we feel that students should have direct contact with children but in a supervised environment. The student gets the chance to observe the pupil he/she is working with and then is in a position to accept his personality, his language, or any weaknesses and strengths he may come with. The students teach the pupils to read in a developmental pattern to reinforce or to fill in the gaps that might have occurred in reading. Language acquisition is an important link in our program. The student learns from the first course that emphasizing language in teaching reading has its base in cognitive and affective learning which leads a child to feel useful and it helps to foster a positive self-concept in a person who is learning to read.

The college students learn to apply their reading theory in a practical, realistic manner paying attention to their personal needs, using content as well as process. The college students serve as role models for their pupils. They, too, are students learning developmental reading, learning to accept themselves as beginning teachers, learning to be comfortable and confident in what they are doing, and we, as college instructors, are cognizent of their emotions, attitudes and values and try to offer all the encouragement necessary for them to carry on to meet their goals.

Because we are situated in the inner city, we have more opportunities to help to train those students who are bi-lingual, who are para-professionals and also in day care, all of whom are on the career ladder working to become educated, skillful, humanistic teachers themselves. These same students para-professionals

as well as the other undergraduates use their newly learned experiences in their senior year in the role of student-teachers. In this setting they apply the knowledge of humanism and skills they have attained to further their interests, attitudes, and values on the many, many pupils with whom they come in contact in their student-teacher experience, always in an urban school setting. There is much opportunity for individualized instruction, as well as group training. There is particular training, not only in the cognitive skills, but also in affective learning. The students learn to build on success, thereby, reducing failure by having realistic expectations which lead to good self-concepts; and they also realize that such factors as motivation, interest, experiences, attitudes play an important part in influencing youngsters to read according to our humanistic model.

Graduate Courses

In the graduate courses in reading some of the same content as in the undergraduate sequence is included but by different means. In our Foundations Course and Survey of Developmental Reading, language development is again stressed as other factors involved in the reading process, and an overview of the skills sequences is taught using appropriate teaching strategies with the pupil in mind. The student learns the importance of a good teacher-pupil relationship; also that the program set up for a pupil needs to be flexible. The student can learn through experience how necessary a good environment for learning is.

We follow a developmental-remedial, developmental strategy. In the former Survey and Foundation courses, the developmental aspect is stressed but in Diagnosis and Treatment of Reading Disabilities special needs of the individual child are considered and planning for remedial work and practice in using and interpreting diagnostic reading tests are discussed in relation to the disabled readers. Once a student understands the developmental process, we turn to the pupil for whom the reading process is not going so smoothly.

In this course we use a case study approach and each student analyzes a child with reading problems. The student has the opportunity of observing the influence of the affective factors. The text book used in this course, Roswell and Natchez, emphazises the psycho-therapeutic principles as well as a variety of ways of teaching pupils with reading problems. How does a child learn? What is his personality? How does he relate to reading? The student learns the effects of a pupil's attitude toward reading; is he interested and motivated or does he "hate" reading as you often hear a child say. The student can learn to cope with the behavior of disabled readers and can assess and plan instructional materials for them. The student can also understand that there is a wide range in a pupil's development and that he/she also understands that individualization in methods and particular materials are effective for a pupil's learning or relearning. The student also understands that his/her own self-concept is connected to a pupil's progress; that the pupil's involvement in a particular task may prove to be more successful.

A wonderful experience for both the graduate student and the pupil is the first practicum which is a concentration requirement. This course enables the student to put into practice the skills learned in the former developmental and diagnostic studies. Humanistic experiences of the one-on-one basis of learning by both student and pupil are boundless. There is so much to learn about the pupil, his personality, language development, cognitive and affective skills and so much to learn about one's own ability to teach, to project, to understand, to find the right means of teaching, and to use motivating materials. This experience is under direct supervision of the college professor who also must be aware not only of the strengths and weaknesses of the graduate student but of the child as well. The contact between the professor and the student is all important because it sets the humanistic model for the student-pupil relationship.

The advanced practicum is the next course. A student could be very comfortable and self-confident and also very resourceful with one pupil, but what happens when one graduate student has a group of six pupils, all of varying backgrounds, abilities, attitudes and aptitudes? These differences are resolved in a developmental reading project method which is practiced under supervision in which the student learns a new approach and the pupils learn to read meaningful work in which their needs are met. At the same time more attention is paid to their comprehension skills which are dealt with on an individual basis within the group. Having the students learn to work with children who have different languages, dialects, and use them as strengths is an important part of our humanistic model.

This practicum, which uses the project method, meets the needs of the total child because children who work in this way develop a love for learning since they are motivated by the interest in the topic which they decided on themselves.

In all of this, the student learns the role of humanism; that materials alone don't affect learning but dealing with the whole child does as we have learned through the teaching of John Dewey, who was one of the first to recognize the importance of humanistic education.

An example of an elective course is Selection and Development of Reading Materials, in which a student not only realizes he/she can make materials to satisfy a child's reading needs but learns that the everyday materials such as newspapers, magazines, children's own writings can be used for every area of the curriculum.

The interest of the pupil is paramount here in the use of appropriate materials. The students encourage their pupils to get library cards and to use

them because the pupils should make their own decision on what and how to read; to make judgments about what they have read which adds to their skills and attitudes needed for the future. The students choose books directly related to pupil's interest in reading. Children's literature is studied, developed, and applied, also community resources are utilized as well. Through these experiences one can find more interest in the selection of appropriate reading materials to satisfy the varying tastes and abilities of the pupils.

The students also learn to research case studies, to apply the knowledge they learned in previous courses and to pass it on to their own pupils. They discover there are fascinating materials around. They understand that offering high quality literature to children can change their reading attitudes. And sometimes by knowing something about bibliotherapy, they might even help a child with a particular problem. Through those books, they become familiar with a child's emotions and free discussion can follow.

The students also realize that there are reading materials for the older pupil as well which are of particular interest. Those motor vehicle pamphlets, subway maps, travel folders, Red Cross safety books, want ads and advertisements in the newspapers are particularly in their line of interest. New, important vocabulary, functional and instructional, is necessary for the growth and development of an older disabled reader who would welcome "life-experience" reading which is in line with our humanistic point of view.

The value of the sequencing of courses from a simple beginning to complex interaction in a group make it possible for increasing valuable learning. In these courses students are able to look at children, take them from where they are and lead them upward through positive interaction.

A student who has accomplished mastery in theory, knowledge and application has earned his/ her degree and is considered to be proficient in comprehending the humanistic model as we practice it at The City College.